

New Mexico Legislative Education Study Committee

1965-2015

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Message from the Chair:

Building Capacity, Not Placing Blame

In recent years, we've seen far too much finger pointing between K-12 and higher education.

Colleges and universities have been blaming high schools for sending them students who are ill-prepared for the rigors of higher education. And the statistics are indeed shameful, with more than 40 percent of New Mexico high school graduates needing some form of remediation as they enter college.

In response, K-12 leaders observe that the quality of their graduates is limited by the quality of their teachers, the vast majority of whom are educated here, in New Mexico's universities. Higher education, they say, only has itself to blame for the lack of rigorous preparation.

But alas, this finger pointing does not solve anything.

No one wins unless we find a way to foster better partnerships between high schools and colleges so that we can simultaneously reduce the need for remediation among high school graduates and increase the quality (and quantity!) of pre-service teachers. When we stop pointing fingers at one another, we might just find we have both hands free to work toward these important goals.

The legislature, and specifically this committee, has been trying for years to help both public education and higher education build capacity—through better course articulation across our institutions of higher education and better alignment of high school curricula and assessments with higher education placement tests.

In addition, high schools might consider partnering with local colleges to provide ongoing professional development for struggling teachers. And colleges might consider enlisting the support of master teachers to help improve teacher preparation programs. The legislature could also help, by fully funding dual credit opportunities which help bridge the gap between high school and the rigors of college coursework.

Such collaborative approaches are necessary if we are to stop pointing fingers and instead work hand in hand to improve educational outcomes for all New Mexicans.

Sincerely,

Dennis G. Roch

Representative Dennis J. Roch Chair

2015-2016 LESC MEMBERS

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2015 LESC MEETING SCHEDULE

June 25-26, 2015 Raton High School Raton

July 21-22 Rio Rancho High School Rio Rancho

August 27-28 Eastern NM University Roswell

September 24-25 Western NM University Silver City October 28-30 State Capitol, Room 307 Santa Fe

November 18-20 State Capitol, Room 307 Santa Fe

December 16-18 State Capitol, Room 307 Santa Fe

> January 18, 2016 State Capitol, TBA Santa Fe



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SEPTEMBER INTERIM MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Western New Mexico University (WNMU) – Strategic Initiatives for Remediation: Noting that New Mexico has a statewide system of seven universities, the president of WNMU stressed the importance of looking for solutions to reduce the need for remediation, primarily by using a multi-pronged strategy to:

- look beyond K-12 and think in terms of birth to postgraduate level education;
- avoid being late when it comes to addressing the student's remedial needs;
- incorporate economic development; and
- plan for New Mexico's future.

Specific to WNMU's approach, the president explained that the university connects a group of faculty with a group of students to apply the same math concepts in other Science, Technology, Engineering and Math courses like Chemistry and Biology. This process, he emphasized, provides remedial students with more opportunities to seek help and do coursework in subject areas which they may be deficient.

To conclude, the president then briefed the committee on WNMU's plan to decrease the number of remedial students who drop out, which is currently at about 50 percent. Although this figure includes students who may have transferred to another university or community college, the focus, he said, should be on retaining the students referred to as "stopouts," who permanently leave the education system for any number of reasons, which include:

- homesickness:
- being a working parent with multiple responsibilities; or
- simply not getting the proper level of attention.

New Mexico State University (NMSU) College of Education: The new Dean of the College of Education (COE) at NMSU and the Director of K-12 Outreach emphasized that the COE is currently reviewing processes to determine what is working well and what needs improvement.

The dean, however, noted opportunities for several COE programs to develop reputations for excellence and distinction, including the:

- Bilingual Immersion Program by attracting American students who currently go abroad to speak Spanish;
- STEM Institute which needs to gain national visibility to bring the best minds to NMSU; and
- Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) Leadership Program NMSU is ideally situated as an HSI-designated university and should be developing more Hispanic leaders.

Next, the Outreach Director indicated that 60 school districts in the state have been directly impacted by NMSU COE outreach initiatives, and noted that:

• 3,000 in-service teachers and 347 administrators have received professional development (PD) training;

- 27,000 K-12 students were impacted;
- 2,000 parents participated in outreach; and
- the college recently awarded 86 masters and 36 doctorate degrees to education administrators serving in 15 public school districts around the state.

Regarding key outreach programs, she highlighted that:

- STEM outreach includes PD for math and science teachers in 20 school districts;
- four districts have STEM after-school programs for students; and
- 34 districts received supplemental training in math and reading for K-3 teachers.

The dean discussed plans to collaborate with other institutions of higher education and incorporate their input into a white paper that he is currently working on.

Approaches and Solutions for At-risk and Habitually Truant Students: Representatives from the New Mexico Sixth Judicial District Court and the Juvenile Probation Office (JPO) of the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) briefed the committee on truancy prevention and intervention solutions for at-risk youth in Grant County.

Citing a report from the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention, one of the presenters referred to truancy as an early indicator of drug use, dropping out of school, suicidal thoughts and attempts, and early sexual behavior. She continued to explain that the community-based truancy prevention program in Grant County uses early identification and graduated interventions by becoming involved at the earliest stages of truancy and prioritizing truancy referrals at the elementary level. A focus is also placed on the environment of the student, with emphasis on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, she said. In addition to truancy prevention and intervention, JPO staff reported that Grant County has a JPO summer school and an alternative JPO school in order to ensure credit recovery and graduation attainment.

JPO staff shared some outcomes and successes of the program, noting that:

- during the past five years in Grant County, the overall delinquency rate has been reduced by 57 percent;
- for school year 2014-2015, 87 percent of students returned to regular school attendance after first contact and after intervention, only 1.5 percent of students became habitually truant in Grant County; and
- no students received a full expulsion at Silver Consolidated Schools (SCS).

Regarding funding sources for the truancy program in Grant County, JPO staff noted that funding is leveraged from different areas, including legislative appropriations, the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee, CYFD, and county and

Approaches" — continued

city subsidies. Furthermore, staff explained that although funding for employment of truancy coaches and social workers in middle schools exists via PED Request for Applications, both SCS and the Cobre Consolidated School District did not meet the eligibility criteria requiring a district level habitual truancy rate of 15 percent or higher.

2015 National Spanish Spelling Bee Champion: The LESC honored Mr. Andrés Arreola, a ninth grade student at Santa Teresa High School in the Gadsden Independent School District (GISD), as the 2015 National Spanish Spelling Bee Champion. On behalf of the committee, the Chair presented Mr. Arreola with English and Spanish proclamations from the House and Senate in recognition of his achievements. The Bilingual Instructional Specialist for GISD was also in attendance to discuss plans to expand participation in the spelling bee by moving the event location from Albuquerque to San Antonio, Texas.



L-R: 2015 National Spanish Spelling Bee Champion Andrés Arreola and LESC Chairman, Representative Dennis J. Roch.

Early College High School Update: Officials from the Gadsden Independent School District (GISD) and Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS) discussed the successes and challenges of their respective early college high schools.

The GISD Superintendent gave a historical overview of Alta Vista Early College High School (AVECHS), which included information on the number of students, teachers, and administrators as well as operational and grant funding the school received. The presenters also provided a summary for what a general day encompasses for each grade level at the school.

Regarding student achievements, the AVECHS Principal

highlighted the following:

- **high school credits earned** by 11th grade, 98 percent of the students have passed all of their required core high school classes:
- **attendance rate** students were in attendance 98 percent of the time;
- **community college credit earned** students were successful in 97 percent of the classes they attempted;
- **college English and college math readiness** students take the Compass exam after grade 9; and
- **enrollment growth** in 2012, there were 20 students and two teachers, and currently there are 150 students and seven teachers.

The LCPS Superintendent informed the committee that 87 percent of the students at Arrowhead Park Early College High School (APECHS) have earned at least one associate degree in addition to their high school diploma upon graduation.

Based on the 2014 graduating class, the presenter noted the following attributes:

- 106 graduates;
- 100 percent graduation rate;
- 44 graduates with honor status;
- 31 graduates from Doña Ana Community College with Crimson Scholar status;
- 119 associate degrees in science, arts, pre-business, criminal justice, general studies, and creative media technology; and
- 91 certificates in specialty areas, including New Mexico Common Core, digital graphics and animation, business fundamentals, certified nursing assistants, emergency medical technicians, and computer technology.

Noting that based on a total of 7,000 credit hours of college work and tuition of \$200 per credit hour at New Mexico State University (NMSU), approximately \$1.4 million of college work was completed by the students.

Regarding the three major strategies for success at APECHS, the LCPS Chief of Staff highlighted:

- creating a unique classroom design based on extensive research of the best classroom designs that work for students;
- empowerment for teachers and school leadership to innovate; and
- collaborative partnerships with schools, the community as a whole, and the business community.

Finally, among potential policy challenges, the representatives noted:

- credit and course articulation;
- higher education standards for teacher qualifications;

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"Early College" — continued

- dual credit funding; and
- a definition of "full-time status" in public schools and in higher education.

New Mexico Higher Education – "May You Live in Interesting Times": The President of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education provided an overview of the status of higher education in New Mexico.

He noted that while full-time equivalent enrollment at public institutions of higher education has been increasing, inflation-adjusted total educational revenue per full time student has remained relatively stable. In addition, the amount of revenue attributable to net tuition has more than doubled over the last 25 years while appropriations have declined by more than 20 percent, he said. Compared to those national averages, financing of higher education in New Mexico displays overall funding near the national average, a state tax effort equivalent to a 7.6 percent effective tax rate, which is the same as the national average; and a share of the state's tax effort dedicated to higher education at 12.1 percent, more than twice the national average of 5.8 percent.

Regarding the productivity of higher education in New Mexico, the president cited National Student Clearinghouse data for four-year institutions, which did not include community colleges, showing a six-year graduation rate of 69 percent nationwide and a 46 percent graduation rate in New Mexico.

The president also described six current thrusts of what he termed "the Change Agenda" for higher education and New Mexico's place within them.

A committee member citing a recent experience at a conference for higher education funding attended by 10 states, including a delegation from New Mexico, commented that New Mexico was the only state present without complete articulation between its colleges, universities, branch campuses, and community colleges. In reply, the president suggested that, while many states, including New Mexico, have mandates for this cooperation, New Mexico's unique governance structure could be a possible impediment to articulation.

New Mexico Assessment Inventory (NMAI) – District Experiences: The LESC heard testimony from Silver City Consolidated Schools and Reserve Independent Schools about their experiences with the NMAI, which under the *General Appropriation Act of 2015* requires every district and charter school to conduct an assessment inventory. District staff stated that they received a memorandum on August 4, 2015 from the Secretary of Public Education setting the NMAI completion deadline on September 11, 2015.

Included in the testimony, district staff explained that a facilitation guide listed a process of five steps to follow as they completed the NMAI Workbook to include: (1) reflect and plan; (2) conduct the NMAI; (3) analyze the NMAI; (4) make district recommendation(s) to streamline and/or strengthen the assessment program; and (5) evaluate.

Within the five steps, district staff explained that some of the recommendations seemed irrelevant because all the assessments listed on the NMAI Workbook are mandated. Included among these recommendations were: identify assessments that the district will continue, and clarify any needs for changes which may be necessary to ensure the assessments are helpful for intended uses; identify the assessments that seem to be candidates for elimination or significant changes; and help districts build toward recommendations while re-engaging with key stakeholders to review potential options and decision points.

Regarding the evaluation and elimination of assessments, district staff did indicate that even though they knew it would not be an option based on the guidelines, they decided to recommend eliminating the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). District staff explained their rationale for elimination noting that: the assessment is not effective for making timely decisions that drive instruction to improve students' academic progress; and data used for calculation of teacher evaluations, including the previous year's assessment data added together with the current year's teacher observation, and other multiple measures, were deemed unviable.

District staff recommended continuing the administration of the following PED-approved assessments:

- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS Next);
- Discovery Education Assessment (DEA);
- End-of-Course (EoC) exams; and
- STAR Reading/Math Assessments.

Among these assessments, district staff emphasized that DEA is their preferred formative assessment, and noted that formative assessments are required by the local school board and the state as a short-cycle assessment. Staff also explained that while it was not mandated to use this assessment for all students, they chose to assess grades K-11 for the following reasons:

- the assessment is an allowable indicator for teacher evaluations that equal 15 percent within the 50 percent measure:
- the DEA is aligned with Common Core State Standards;
- it measures student progress toward grade-level standards;
- it is used as a research-based evidence tool to identify ways to remediate and provide interventions for academic success; and
- the results are available immediately to track students' academic progress and inform teacher practice.

Last, district staff stressed the importance of collecting and tracking data to inform and drive instruction; and recognize which assessments are most effective for specific purposes.

SEPTEMBER INTERIM MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Options to Reduce Assessment Loads: LESC advisory member, Representative G. Andrés Romero, discussed HB 539a, (2015), *Eliminate Certain Grade 9 & 10 Assessments*, with the committee. The Chair noted that HB 539a may be considered for an LESC endorsement for the upcoming 2016 legislative session and recommended that the committee review the bill for any possible changes.

Representative Romero explained that HB 539a amends the *Assessment and Accountability Act* to remove the grade 9 and grade 10 short-cycle diagnostic assessments in reading, language arts, and mathematics from the state's Readiness Assessment System.

Regarding provisions in current law, Representative Romero stated that the *Assessment and Accountability Act* requires the following assessments:

- for grades 3-8 and 11, standards-based assessments in mathematics, reading and language arts, and social studies;
- for grades 3-8, a standards-based writing assessment with the writing assessment scoring criteria applied to the extended response writing portions of the language arts standards-based assessments;
- for one of the grades 3-5, 6-8, and 11, standards-based assessments in science;
- in grade 9, a short-cycle diagnostic assessment in reading, language arts, and mathematics to be locally administered in the fall and at least two additional times during the year;
- in grade 10, a short-cycle diagnostic assessment in reading, language arts, and mathematics that also serves as an early indicator of college readiness, to be locally administered at least three times during the year; and
- during the fall semester of grade 11, one or more of the following chosen by the student:
 - a college placement assessment;
 - a workforce readiness assessment; or
 - an alternative demonstration of competency using standards-based indicators.

Representative Romero explained to the committee that this legislation would remove the requirement to administer short-cycle diagnostic assessments for grades 9-10 but not prevent districts from administering them if they wish to do so.

With regard to a section of law in the Assessment and Accountability Act that HB 539a refers to, a committee member mentioned that by removing the requirement for grades 9-10, it appears that the requirement is moved to grade 11 that provides the three optional assessments for students to take.

The member continued to say that while it collapses this section some, and is headed in the right direction, perhaps repealing the whole section of statute would make it simpler.

Regarding repealing the whole section of statute and considering the pros and cons of that decision, Representative Romero explained that by grade 11, there has to be some sort of assessment for college readiness. He added that students in grade 11 should be taking the ACT or SAT, which may be the intent for leaving that section in.

Representative Romero explained that the original intent of the bill was to eliminate redundancy due to PARCC; however, in light of testimony regarding the New Mexico Assessment Inventory, he said it may be necessary to keep some of these short-cycle assessments as a way to gauge students' progress throughout the year.

When a committee member asked whether there has been any collaboration with the Public Education Department (PED) regarding HB 539a, Representative Romero stated that he intends to work on the bill with the LESC prior to meeting with PED.

Legislative Lottery Scholarship Update: The Financial Aid Director for the Higher Education Department (HED) provided the committee with an update on the Legislative Lottery Scholarship, which is the state's largest financial aid program for higher education.

In 2014, an amendment to the *Legislative Lottery Tuition Scholarship Act* (SB 347aa, *Lottery Tuition Scholarship Fund Solvency* (Laws 2014, Chapter 80)) made substantive changes to address the solvency of the Lottery Tuition Fund that include a reduction in the number of eligible semesters from 8 to 7; an increase in the credit hour requirement from 12 credit hours to 15 credit hours per semester at four-year institutions; and the decision to base scholarship awards on the average institution-sector tuition rates – not on 100 percent of each institution's tuition.

With tuition payments for FY 16 estimated at approximately \$64 million, the Lottery Scholarship, which covered 95 percent of sector average tuition for the last academic year, will cover 90 percent of the tuition for Fall 2015 and Spring 2016, according to HED. While lottery proceeds have remained stable, and continue to do so at approximately \$40 million annually over the past several years, rising tuition costs and increased student demand have outpaced revenue into the fund.

HED also noted that the cost savings enacted through the 2014 changes to student eligibility have been offset by tuition increases. Looking forward to FY 16 and FY 17, the Lottery Tuition Fund will be supplemented by Liquor Excise Tax revenue, estimated at \$19 million per year. However, the Liquor Excise Tax revenue sunsets at the end of FY 17 and will reduce tuition support in FY 18 by roughly 30 percent. Therefore, barring additional changes, HED reported that the fund will no longer be able to support full tuition costs.

Affordability of New Mexico Colleges: HED staff also provided a report on the cost of higher education in New Mexico compared to other states in the in the western region of the US. Citing recent data from the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education, HED stated that not only were New Mexico' average tuition and fees among the lowest of the western states in academic year (AY) 2014-2015, but the tuition and fees were comparatively low for the

SEPTEMBER INTERIM MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

"Affordability" — continued

western region across both four-year and two-year institutions of higher education (IHEs) in AY 2014-2015. From AY 2009-2010 to AY 2014-2015, HED indicated that while in-state tuition and fees at public four-year IHEs increased an average of 17 percent nationwide over a similar time span, national median household income declined by 4.6 percent after adjusting for inflation. Other factors impacting college affordability in New Mexico include lottery proceeds, enrollment levels, and Liquor Excise Tax revenues.

Regarding tuition and total cost of attendance, HED stated that New Mexico's six-year graduation rate for four-year IHEs is roughly 46 percent, which is below the national average of 69 percent. In addition, New Mexico's students accumulate more tuition costs and debt when they take longer to graduate from college which could cause students to end up with a high total cost of attendance despite relatively low tuition and fees. To conclude, HED stated that in New Mexico, even though

state General Fund support has nearly recovered to prerecession levels, tuition is only one factor that impacts college affordability. Other factors include, median income, total cost of attendance, and lottery scholarships.

Community and Superintendent Input: At the end of the first day of the meeting, the Director of Field Experience at Western New Mexico University (WNMU) informed the committee that "law" was changed at the PED level, so that persons seeking alternative licensure now have two years to complete the requirements, whereas previously they had three years. This, combined with an increase in the number of such candidates, current staffing levels, and a requirement that school districts provide mentors to persons new to the education field who are seeking alternative licensure, has made the process burdensome to students, university faculty, and district mentoring programs. The Chair directed LESC staff to look at the law and rules governing this issue, in order to see when the change had occurred, and if it requires further exploration.

OCTOBER AGENDA TOPICS

- University of New Mexico (UNM) College of Education (COE) Redesign: The Dean of the UNM COE will present his ideas to the committee on how to improve teacher preparation and other COE programs.
- College Affordability and Access: The Secretary of Higher Education will continue the discussion from last month's meeting on keeping college affordable for all New Mexico students.
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Action Team: New Mexico First, a public policy organization, will inform the committee on its efforts to bolster STEM education in K-12 public schools.
- **Microsoft IT Academy:** The Director of Strategic Initiatives for Microsoft will provide details on its training programs and technical courses for students, faculty, and staff who are interested in pursuing a career in IT.
- Advanced Placement (AP) Statewide Test Results: Senior staff from The College Board will brief the committee on AP test results for New Mexico and highlight key indicators.
- Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) Efforts to Produce Positive Outcomes for Foster Children: LESC members will hear testimony from CYFD staff on what the agency is doing to support foster children, as well as CYFD plans to collaborate with the Public Education Department (PED) to improve educational outcomes.
- New Mexico Assessment Inventory Statewide Results: As a follow up to testimony last month on school district experiences with the inventory process, PED staff will brief the committee on the statewide results of the assessment inventory.
- **Debit Cards for Teacher Supplies:** The LESC will receive an update from PED staff on the implementation of the department's plan to provide funds for teachers to purchase school supplies.
- College of Education (COE) Report Cards: Staff representing COEs statewide will join PED staff to discuss details on plans to tie teacher performance to the COEs that graduate them.

Legislative Education Study Committee

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